

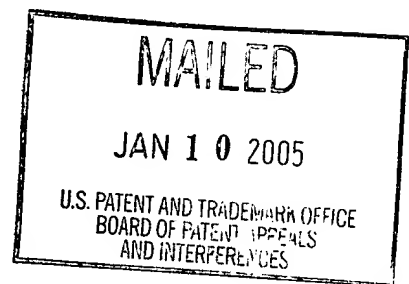
UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS
AND INTERFERENCES**

Ex parte WILHELMUS IBES

Appeal No. 2004-0447
Application No. 09/733,020

VACATUR AND REMAND



Before WILLIAM F. SMITH, ADAMS, and GRIMES, Administrative Patent Judges.

WILLIAM F. SMITH, Administrative Patent Judge.

This appeal involves plant patent Application No. 09/733,020. The question raised in this appeal involves whether evidence of foreign sales of the claimed reproducible plant variety may enable an otherwise non-enabled printed publication disclosing the plant, thereby creating a bar under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b). The Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit considered that issue in In re Elsner, 381 F.3d 1125, 72 USPQ2d 1038 (Fed. Cir. 2004), and held in the affirmative. Id. at 1128, 72 USPQ2d at 1041. In so holding, the court stated that “[t]he foreign sale must not be an obscure, solitary occurrence that would go unnoticed by those skilled in the art.” Id. at 1131, 72 USPQ2d at 1043. The court also stated that the record did not establish that “even if the interested public would readily know of the foreign sales, those sales enabled one of ordinary skill in the art to reproduce the claimed plants without undue

experimentation.” Id. Thus, the court vacated the Board’s decision and remanded the case for “further factual findings relating to the accessibility of the foreign sales of the claimed plants and the reproducibility of the claimed plants from the plants that were sold.” Id.


In this case, the examiner is relying upon applicant’s admission that the claimed plant “was sold outside the United States on or about March 1, 1999” as evidence that PBR 981669 (European Union) is enabled. Examiner’s Answer, page 4. However, there is no evidence whether the sales were of the type that would be noticed by those of skill in the art. Nor has the other issue raised by the Federal Circuit in Elsner, whether the sales would enable one skilled in the art to reproduce the claimed plant without undue experimentation, been addressed.

Accordingly, we vacate the examiner’s rejection and remand the case to the examiner to determine whether the sales of the claimed plant (1) were “an obscure, solitary occurrence that would go unnoticed by those skilled in the art” and (2) would enable one to reproduce the plant without undue experimentation.

VACATED; REMANDED


William F. Smith

Administrative Patent Judge



Donald E. Adams
Administrative Patent Judge


Eric Grimes

Administrative Patent Judge

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